

The Temptations of a Nine O'Clock Girl

The story of a beautiful girl who tried to go straight

With an erring sister's memory to keep always before her the tragedy of New York, Rose had vowed to stay good.

But she was too beautiful.

Around her swirled intrigue.

A millionaire, bored with prosperity and respectability, thought he was taking a fatherly interest in her.

His son had a bet on that he could take her to dinner.

Would she be able to stay clear of it all?

IN THE PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS WE LEARNED THAT—

Henry Marshall is a self-made millionaire, past middle age, but alert and vigorous. He has a wife and a son and daughter, but in his loneliness he tries desperately to win the friendship of Rose Richards, a pretty clerk in a candy store, who has come to New York in an effort to find her sister Ethel. But Rose is annoyed at his visits and repels him. One night as she is walking home from work she hears her name called in a husky voice, and is horrified to find that the bedraggled creature who has accosted her is her sister, ill and in a shocking condition. She takes Ethel home with her. Ethel lives only long enough to warn Rose to stay good and to keep away from men, and Rose is determined to obey her sister's instructions.

Marshall's son, George, is a spendthrift and idler. When he is told that he will either have to go to work in the shipping department of his father's business or go on his own, he wisely accepts the job offered. At his club that night, young Marshall makes a bet with some of his friends that within a month he will take Rose Richards out to supper. He contrives to follow her to her rooming house, and, upon an impulse, takes a room in the same house.

Henry Marshall, chagrined over his failure to win a smile from Rose, is unable, nevertheless, to stay away from the candy store. When Rose at sight of him turns away, he is waited upon by Miss Morgan, another salesgirl, who offers to arrange for his meeting Rose. They have dinner together, and he promises to finance her campaign for the conquest of Rose.

"I think you'll be satisfied. You can see it before she does, and pass on it. It'll take a few days, of course, especially as I must keep my job at the store and can't take all the time I want to."

"Tomorrow night at 6, then," he said, anxious to have this phase of the affair over. It affected his sense of dignity to be plotting in this way with an unknown girl, for however he tried to delude himself, he knew he was plotting.

"I'll be here," she agreed, more and more elated. "By the way, did I tell you my name was Vera Morgan?"

"Do you know my name?" he asked, suddenly wondering.

"No, I had no way of finding out?"

"Do you think Rose knows it?"

"I'm sure she doesn't; she told me so."

"Oh, you've talked about me with her?"

The girl was too quick-witted not to understand that there was suspicion in his mind. "Sure," she responded. "I've tried to get her to be nice to you. I told her she was silly to be so offish. But you see she's timid she's afraid you mean some harm."

"You must try to get that idea out of her head," he said solemnly.

"Don't worry, I'll tell her the truth—that you're lonely and want a little young life, but wouldn't do her any harm if you had the chance."

"That's it exactly," he declared fervently. "I'm not that kind of a

man. She's lonely, and I'm lonely; and we can help each other."

Vera Morgan wondered whether he was trying to fool himself or her, but she betrayed nothing of what was in her mind. She merely nodded in an understanding way, saying, "Sure! I wouldn't be helping you if I didn't think so."

"Of course not," he agreed. "Oh, Miss Morgan," he added hesitatingly, "mayn't I give you a little money now? Just to make you feel that you have come into that legacy, you know."

She wanted to laugh at his hesitation, but she kept a straight face and answered him with a little hesitation of her own.

"Why, if you want to. It would help, of course. Just a little money. I don't want you to think—"

"I'll only think it's very kind of you to help me so understandingly," he interrupted. "I don't know how much there is there"—he handed her across the table a little roll of bills—"but it will pay for a movie anyhow," he added, with a clumsy attempt at humor.

She thrust the bills into her handbag with a murmured, "Thank you! You are very kind."

"My name," he said, "is Henry Merton."

Rose Richards was in good health, and she was by temperament cheerful, so she was grateful for the opportunity that enabled her to earn a living, to have almost enough to eat and to have a little left each week to send to her mother. But she was young enough

to crave pleasure, and to hail a chance for it with joy.

When Vera Morgan invited her to a movie one night, she hesitated only long enough to allow Vera to assure her that she could afford it and that her pleasure would be half spoiled if Rose did not go with her. And she enjoyed the entertainment from start to finish. She laughed wholeheartedly over the comedy; she thrilled to the desperate straits of the heroine;

away such things in the face of Vera's manifest liking for her, combined with her hearty kindness. And she had no difficulty in subduing or forgetting entirely her previous doubts concerning Vera.

She went three times to the movies and once to the theater with Vera, and each time she returned home with lighter spirits. Her rigidity of attitude and her timorousness became less. The girls at the store remarked on it and drew her attention to the fact that her sales were increasing by reason of her greater humanness.

She couldn't help but be aware of it herself and she willingly relaxed so far as to permit a timid smile to light up her face when she met the very handsome and engaging young man who had the room across the hall from her, and who never failed to lift his hat respectfully when they encountered on the stairs or in the hall.

George Marshall was playing his part to perfection. He had made

He easily enough dropped his old habits of dissipation, induced thereby by an increasing determination to win his bet. And that determination was affected by a growing admiration for the shy, sweet girl who was so different from the girls he had been accustomed to meeting whether on his nights of wild dissipation, or at such times as he took part in the more respectable affairs in which his mother or sister were interested. He thrilled at the thought of taking that beautiful creature to supper among his friends.

He knew the affair was progressing very slowly, but the oftener he met Rose, which was usually once a day, either in the morning or at night, the more certain he was that she was not the sort to be hurried; that, indeed, he might lose altogether by conducting himself otherwise than as a hard-working clerk would.

The time was slipping by, however, and he had not got beyond



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she wept freely over the pathetic episodes. In a word, she forgot herself and was very happy.

On the way home Vera confided to her that she had received a little legacy which would enable her to live better than before and to indulge in a little harmless pleasure. She laughed down Rose's scruples about accepting favors when she was not in a position to return them.

"If you had the money," argued Vera, "you would think it mean of me to refuse to go with you because I hadn't any. Don't be so foolish. You add to my pleasure when you go with me. I don't like to go alone, and I would rather have you than anybody else."

Rose knew that if she had been in the position to invite some one to go out with her, she would not have chosen Vera. She had more than once been shocked by Vera's liberal attitude toward men, but it was easy to condone or explain

up his mind that he could not carry this girl off her feet by any of the old methods that had been so successful with the more sophisticated young women he had previously dealt with. He had decided, in fact, that his must be at least a slow approach, however rapidly he moved later.

Another thing that entered into the matter, too, was the fact that he had become immediately interested in his work at the office of the Amalgamated Mills Company, as his father's concern was called. He had found that he had an aptitude for business. The humiliation he had anticipated from entering the office in one of the lower clerkships had been dissipated at once. On the contrary, he had discovered a tendency to applaud him for his act in starting there, and his application to his work, combined with his genial nature, quickly made him a favorite.

the morning or evening salute, with just a word about the weather when it was snowing hard, and he was becoming uneasy, when chance did for him what no possible maneuvering he had been able to think of had done.

He knew she went out occasionally in the evening, for he could hear her door open and shut; and one evening he followed her. He was relieved to find that she met another girl and went with her to a moving picture. He went into the theater after them and sat near the back. When they came out, he followed her again.

She and Vera took the subway, and she got off at 23d Street, Vera going on alone. He took the other side of the street and followed her as she hurried along.

Complications, and then more complications, with Rose still unaware of most of them. But when she finds out—

LAUGH AND LEARN—

The Real Definition

By Kerry Conway

